

The "broadcast flag" seems to be a reaction to pressure from big businesses who are single-mindedly focused on maximizing future profits at the cost of the consumer. I support the artist/owners copyright protection. It should protect their material from misuse and from illegal profiteering. However, just like many of the antivirus programs that spring up for computers, someone will always find a way to make them obsolete. There are many ways to protect an owners rights without rolling a boulder in the path of progress. For the first time, those who would never have had a voice for their work now can access their public. Digital video (as just one example) has provided a cost-effective medium that allows otherwise unrecognized talent to flourish and present material that was previously considered not profitable enough to fund. Because of the lower costs involved with producing digital video vs. film, funding is more available and therefore, a wider range of work is available to the public. Instead of being limited to the most marketable/profitable work, we as consumers, as a culture have access to seeing/hearing about the many fascinating views and details of our world and ourselves. The importance and impact of this creative thinking should not be overlooked. It informs and inspires and addresses issues that are too often overlooked and underexposed by the major production and broadcast companies.

By introducing a concept like this broadcast flag, we would be taking a step backwards by gagging instead of envisioning the possibilities of the digital medium. We're being asked to think like censors instead of visionaries. Consider all the fears that existed 20 years ago around the concept of personal computers and the accessibility to information that they offered to the masses. There were those who would have limited the access to them and yet look at the businesses that have been inspired by their use.

Limiting in any way, the use of or access to, the digital medium would be short-sighted and would only benefit those who see it strictly as a profitable business. Their lack of insight into the yet-to-be-discovered benefits of the medium will only slow down the business they're trying to profit from. And unfortunately, those who are being overlooked for the sake of profits are the public, our culture as a whole. Our access to alternative views, to ideas that inspire and move us, and connect us to creative thinking, and to information that is less accessible to the average person - all of this and more will be hindered and discouraged by the limitations being proposed.

Information is meant to be shared not hoarded for profit. Instituting the use of a broadcast flag will only deter for awhile. Information is a living entity and if it exists, it will always find an alternative path to its public. Restrictions like this will only inspire creative thinkers to find another alternatives and will most likely encourage the use of other mediums. Consequently, those who seek to control the medium will in the end, defeat their own purpose. Instead of encouraging a powerful medium to flourish and riding the crest of the wave, they will end up with little to surf.

I strongly urge the FCC to find a more creative means of protecting copyrights without asking the average consumer to pay the price or suffer the consequences of limited access.

Sincerely,
Ralph Crongeyer